



**Big Cat South Pacific Holidays Pty Ltd,  
Shop 7, Cascade Walk No 6 Stockton St,  
Nelson bay, NSW 2315**

**Web: [www.imaginecruises.com.au](http://www.imaginecruises.com.au)**

**Phone: 02 49 84 9000 /  
ABN: 36 066 928 256**

## **28<sup>th</sup> August 2024 Submission regarding Senate inquiry**

**RE: Consultation with community Wind turbine area declared off Port Stephens Coast**

**(a) Efficacy of community engagement in planning the proposed site.**

Imagine Cruises has been operating commercial Whale watching and Dolphin Swim Cruises since 1995 and we have grave concerns for our Eco Tourism industry. The consultation prior to announcement of the proposed site was minimal. MP Hon Chris Bowan, Minister for Energy, attended a meeting with concerned residents in Nelson Bay earlier in the year subsequent to the announcement of the site and told residents that 40% of Port Stephens residents had been letter box dropped. This was untrue, not one person has responded in the affirmative to questions regarding the notice from Government.

**(b) Subsequent to the announcement of the site this community has largely responded with grave concern. Visual concern for viewing the turbines (which look industrial) along the recently restored coastal walk. At a meeting I attended where MP Bowan was in attendance, we were shown an artist's impression of what it would look like from the shore and the picture showed no turbines. This would not be the case however as 20 K is the same distance as from Fingal Bay to Broughton Island and Broughton Island is only 80 metres high but can be clearly seen. The turbines proposed are 280 metres high and would be lit up at night.**

**(c) The shoreline where the cables might come ashore is land managed by the Traditional owners. (Worimi people). I believe they have concerns.**

**(d) Impact on marine life. My primary concern is for the potential impact on marine life not just within the area proposed but as a result of the movement of shipping. The busiest shipping lane in Australia where 6000 ships a year make passage through the proposed area will now have to navigate either wide of the site or what is more likely, ships will choose to transit closer inshore, particularly when heading north as they will not want the extra cost of passaging against the East Australian Current which can eddy at over 5 knots south.**

The passage of Coal ships and Bauxite carriers to Newcastle and container ships to Port Botany, Port Melbourne and Passenger ships to Sydney will now almost certainly be directed closer inshore. An area where over 40,000 Humpback

whales move from May to November. Whales will be exposed to shipstrike both from passing vessels and construction vessels crossing from Newcastle harbour to the Turbine site.

Not just Humpback whales but numerous other Cetacean species use these waters. Short beaked Common Dolphin, Pan Tropical Spotted Dolphin, Oceanic Bottlenose dolphin. Minke Whales, Brydes Whales. 25 million Shearwaters fly through the same area from August to late April and a colony of extremely vulnerable Goulds Petrels also forage in the area. There will inevitably be loss of seabirds from turbine blade collisions.

The area designated for Turbines is also the main fishing ground for large pelagic Fish such as Tuna, Swordfish, Wahoo and Marlin and we have been told there will be a half kilometre exclusion zone around the Site. Commercial Fishing and Charter fishing.

The Head of the Newcastle Port Authority told me personally that longer term anchoring of Coal or Bauxite ships off Newcastle Port had been stopped subsequent to the stranding of the Pasha Bulka 17 years ago. It was well recognised that The Tasman Sea can expose anchored vessels to extreme weather including 15 metre seas at times. The recent loss of 80 containers off Port Stephens in 2018 from the YM Efficiency when it hit massive seas also proves that the Tasman Sea can be a very dangerous place for any floating structure.

- (e) I feel that the lack of consultation with our community which relies in great part on our natural environment and Environmentally Sensitive Tourism (Eco Tourism) showed a very real disdain for our region.

My company whole heartedly opposes the current location suggested for the turbines. We suggest a possible location at the old BHP site at Kooragang Island would probably be acceptable but risking accidents, pollution and collisions with marine life at the current site is not a sensible plan.

Kind regards

*F. Future*

Frank Future

Managing Director

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